

Executive Summary

Section 3039 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) required the Secretary of Transportation, in coordination with the Secretary of the Interior, to “undertake a comprehensive study of alternative transportation needs in national parks and related Federal Lands.” The results of the Federal Lands Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) study identified significant transit needs at sites managed by the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Many of these popular federally-managed sites are experiencing very high visitation levels that are continuing to increase. Site managers often view transit system implementation as a way to address the challenges created by these high visitation levels. Implementing transit on federally-managed lands can help achieve the following goals:

- Relieve traffic congestion and parking shortages;
- Enhance visitor mobility and accessibility;
- Preserve sensitive natural, cultural, and historic resources;
- Provide improved interpretation, education and visitor information services;
- Reduce pollution; and
- Improve economic development opportunities for gateway communities.



*Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains
National Park, Tennessee*

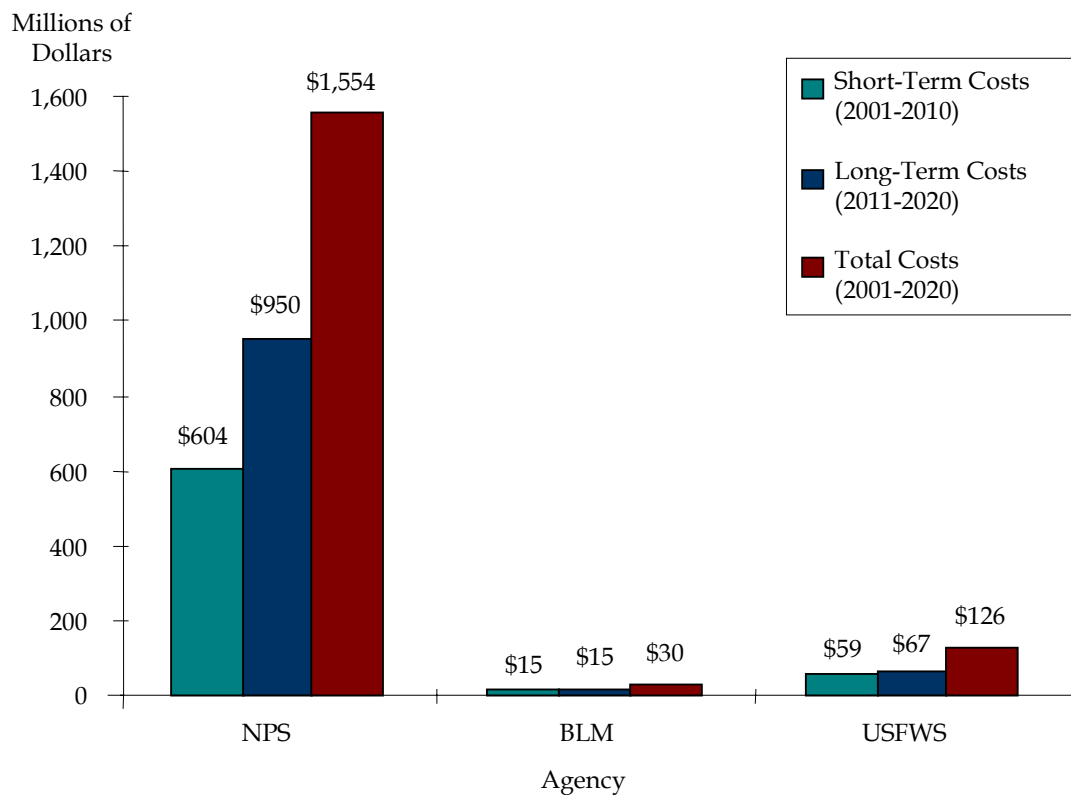
Transportation needs and resource preservation goals often work together to encourage implementation of transit services. Many sites can accommodate additional visitors but cannot provide the roadway and parking capacity required for additional automobiles. Reasons may include negative resource impacts of roadway and parking construction, prohibitive cost, or both. Many site managers believe that transit can serve as a cost-effective method of accommodating additional demand, while at the same time preserving resources and providing the visitor a more pleasant experience.

Two hundred seven sites were evaluated in the study; 85 with extensive field visits and 122 with telephone calls or brief visits. Transit needs were identified at 118 of 169 NPS sites that were included in the study, 6 of 15 BLM sites, and 13 of 23 USFWS sites. Transit needs include improving or expanding existing transit services as well as implementing new transit services. Bus transit is the most common form of transit service operation on Federal lands, and based on the study results, it will continue to be the predominant mode, although water transportation needs are significant as well.

In general, at sites where transit is feasible and prudent, needs are modest and can be served by a small number of vehicles operating on a seasonal basis. At many sites, there appear to be opportunities to recover at least a portion of operations and maintenance costs through fares. At a smaller number of sites, it may be possible to charge fares that are adequate to recover a portion of capital investment as well.

Needs were identified for both the short-term period (2001-2010) and the long-term period (2011-2020). The total need for the 20-period is estimated at approximately \$1.71 billion. Of this \$1.71 billion, approximately 40 percent (\$678 million) is required between 2001 and 2010, with the remaining 60 percent (\$1.03 billion) required between 2011 and 2020. Figure ES.1 summarizes the ATS need identified in the study.

Figure 1. Summary of ATS Needs on Federally-Managed Lands



The growth in costs between the short-term and the long-term periods is a result of two types of cost increases. Capital-intensive projects identified during the study that will require long lead times to plan and obtain funding are included in the long-term period costs. Secondly, the annual operations and maintenance costs increase substantially because of the greater number of systems operating during the long-term period.